Class E687

Book .C97

Author

Title

Imprint

16—47372-1 GPO

A TRIBUTE

TO THE

Life and Character

OF

JAMES ABRAM GARFIELD.

A MEMORIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT MANISTEE, SEPT. 25, 1881,

BY

B. Mac. CUTCHEON.

REPRINTED

From "Manistee Times,"

OF SEPTEMBER 29, 1881.

0886D3
3 J. 45

E 687
.C97
H.B.P. 25 Jan. 1945

James Abram Garfield.

A MEMORIAL ADDRESS

Delivered by Gen. B. M. Cutcheon, at Manistee, September 25, 1881.

A great man has fallen. Great men are the richest boon of God to man.

In all true greatness, there is a spark of essential divinity, and poor human nature, which so often shames us with its meanness, stands glorified in the light of that greatness.

We all share in, and partake of, their glory; and because they are men, and we are men, we claim a brotherhood with them,—a brotherhood in their nobility, similar to the brotherhood of kinship.

One truly great life, like that of a Luther, is worth millions of common lives, because it has in it the potency to change and make over millions of common lives.

The birth or death of a really great man is an epoch, because the lives of great men make and change the currents of the world's history.

Towering above the common level of the race like great mountain peaks, they shine across the spaces of centuries and continents, casting the light of their lives upon and into millions of lesser lives, making them brighter, nobler, grander, forever and forever.

Thus, Washington, Lincoln, Garfield, are OUR Washington, OUR Lincoln, and OUR Garfield, now and evermore.

Their lives have been a power to lift our lives above their narrow bounds; and there is no soul in any land where the light of civilization shines, and where their story has been told, that is not lifted up, made nobler in purpose, truer to justice and liberty, and stronger for right and patriotism by their noble example.

So, to-day, we pause in the midst of our busy and rushing lives, to study the lesson of the hour,—the lesson of a great, good life.

We judge greatness not more by the work which it achieves, than by the obstacles it overcomes; and, judged by this standard, JAMES ABRAM GARFIELD was one of the greatest of men. Born to a heritage of poverty, obscurity and friendlessness, by his innate force, his inherent greatness, he rose through all the grades of service and of honor to the highest pinnacle of earthly fame; he filled all lands with his renown, and left two continents sincere mourners at his grave.

In a lowly log cabin, in the forests of northern Ohio, less than fifty years ago, he was born.

His childhood days were spent amidst the petty cares and ceaseless struggles of extreme poverty.

But fate could not keep him down. While as a boy he labored at the carpenter's bench, there came to him, as to the divine Prophet of Nazareth of old, a voice telling him that he was born for nobler things, and then he felt within him the stirring or a divine impulse to rise up and conquer his kingdom.

And so he vanquished "those twin jailors of the aspiring soul—low birth and iron fortune," making his own the motto of the old Roman: "I will find a way or make one."

There is something intensely pathetic in that hard struggle of his early days,—most pathetic to some of us who have trod with weary feet and aching heart the self same road.

How he beat the wings of his prisoned soul against the cruel bars of poverty! With a widowed mother largely dependent upon him, with no resource but his own hands wherewith to win his way, he struggled heroically against every adverse circumstance, toiling at the mechanic's bench, doing duty as janitor of the academy, driving upon the tow-path of the canal and teaching the district school, until finally he realized his dream, achieved a liberal education, and stood full armored for life's battle.

In the desert of poverty he smote the rock of adversity with the rod of resistless will, and the longed-for fountains gushed forth.

And this is the first lesson of this hour, "That there is no impossibility to him that wills."

Let no aspiring soul be downcast, let no brave heart turn back, but when obstacles seem insurmountable, remember James A. Garfield, the brave young wood-chopper of the Western Reserve.

At 17 he was the carpenter boy; at 19 janitor of Geauga Academy; at 20 the school teacher; at 23 the collegian; at 25 the college graduate; at 26 Professor in Hiram College Institute; at 28 its President; at 29 Senator of the State of Ohio; at 30 Colonel of Volunteers; at 31 Brigadier General; at 32 Major General, Chief of Staff, and Representative in Congress; from that time on for eighteen consecutive years re-elected from the same district, a leader in legislation throughout the most momentous years of the history of the Republic; at 45 member of Electoral Commission; at 48 made United States Senator from Ohio; at 48 taken up against his protest and nominated and elected to the Presidency of fifty millions of free people; at 49 inaugurated President, and just two months before his fiftieth birth day, he died the victim to the disappointed selfishness and overweening egotism of a worthless vagabond.

Such are some of the indices of his growth—mechanic, student, teacher, senator, soldier, statesman, orator, leader, President!

And this growth was not fortuitous, nor out of proportion to his merits. "Some men are born great, some men achieve greatness."

Other men have attained to high position without deserving it; but JAMES A. GARFIELD accepted no position he had not qualified himself to fill, he wore no laurels that he had not bravely won.

In his early years he had laid broad and deep the foundations of his character, upon the everlasting rock of Christian principles, and upon those principles he built the structure of his future life.

It is impossible to follow him through his varied

career. Let us rather spend a few moments in studying himself—his character as he was.

1ST. HE WAS LOYAL TO HIS PRINCIPLES.

While a young man he identified himself with the minority party in politics, and espoused the cause of the slave.

No man could then foresee the revolution which was already swiftly approaching, and which converted the minority into the triumphant majority.

When the note of war sounded, he left his seat in the Senate, and the certain prospect of political promotion to offer his life upon the altar of his country, to endure hardship and privation, when he might have remained at home with ease and honor.

Again, when the waves of financial heresy were sweeping over the land, threatening to bury all sound principles beneath the froth of an inflated currency, when many of his own political party bent before the storm, and sacrificed their principles for place, he never for one instant faltered or pandered ; but as one after another deserted the ranks, he stood all the firmer, and his voice rang out above the babel of the hour, the admitted champion of honest money for honest men.

Standing upon the floor of the house on the 6th of March, 1878, he uttered these memorable words:—"This is an issue of such transcendent importance that it may render all others obsolete. It is a struggle of honor against dishonor ; of law against anarchy ; a struggle in which the peace and safety of employer and employed, government and people, may be involved. In such a contest, I care not into what party the issue lands me, or in what company it finds me.

When it comes I shall stand with the men who defend the money of the constitution and the faith of the country."

2D. HE WAS A MAN OF PROFOUND POLITICAL INTUITIONS.

He was always found upon the right side; for union against anarchy; for war till a safe and honorable peace was achieved; for amnesty when the war was ended; for a sound reconstruction upon the basis of loyalty; for national good faith and honesty as against repudiation; for a sound and enduring financial policy, and for the just and honorable redemption of every promise of the Republic.

3D. AS AN ORATOR HE WAS CONVINCING.

He was a master of English diction, and possessed of a knowledge of all matters pertaining to statesmanship, so varied, so comprehensive and so ready of command, that upon whatever topic he spoke, he left little to be desired.

Of commanding presence and voice, the massiveness of his frame well comported with the massiveness of his thought. He dealt little in satire or sarcasm, and never in personal invective.

His style was calm, logical, and candid, and he bore his hearer along, not by the torrent of his passion, or by his personal magnetism, but rather by his power to instruct the reason and to convince the judgment.

If to convince is the end of oratory, he was a consummate orator.

4TH. HE WAS A SINCERE LOVER OF LIBERTY AND EQUALITY.

Having himself felt the bondage of poverty and narrow surroundings, he coveted and demanded the

largest liberty and the fullest opportunity for the struggling people everywhere. His whole soul went out in sympathy for the prisoners of Fate who were seeking to escape from the prison-house of their low estate. "All rights for all," was his battle-cry.

5TH. HE WAS A MANLY MAN.

There was nothing small or petty about him. His heart was large and warm. While he was an earnest antagonist, he was at the same time a generous one. He struck hard blows, but he never fought with poisoned weapons. He had no personal enemies. He was a favorite with men of all political parties.

Among the heartiest words of praise spoken of him during the hot campaign of 1880, were those which came from his political adversaries.

6TH. HE WAS A PURE AND TRUE MAN.

Coming into the public service at the beginning of the civil war, he served through all those exciting times, and during all the period of reconstruction and reconciliation—years when a vast debt was being created, when thousands of millions of liabilities were being incurred, when claims of vast magnitude were being pressed against the government. During the most of this time he stood at the head of some of the most important committees of Congress, and, with opportunities where a corrupt man could have amassed millions, it is sufficient to say that he lived and died a poor man.

7TH. AS A STATESMAN HE WAS FAR-SEEING.

He studied every question thoroughly. He considered it in all its relations.

He did not build for the day; he built for the future years.

Whether the question was the preservation of the Union, the re-construction and restoration of the states, the abolition of slavery, the payment of the pubilc debt, the building up of industries, or the settling of a national financial policy, he first exhausted the history of the past, he took into his vision the long vista of the future, and, guided by the past, he acted for the enduring welfare of the Republic.

5th. He was a brave man.

Not only was he brave upon the battle-field–though he abundantly proved that at Chicamauga and elsewhere—but brave in the loftiest and noblest sense -- brave to do right though it brought him misunderstanding and obloquy, as when he defended Milligan and Bowles against the assertion of martial law in Indiana—brave in accepting the gravest responsibilities, as in the Electoral Commission of 1877—and finally, brave in the calm and serene self-possession with which he confronted the grim messenger of death.

When all others were panic-stricken, he alone was calm.

When all others despaired, he bade them hope.

He lay for weary weeks of pain, within the gloomy shade of death, without one weak, or shrinking, or distrustful word. There is something sublime and awe-inspiring in this lofty courage–in the magnificent self-poise and self-possession of a soul too great, too good, to be afraid to die.

I thank God for the life of James A. Garfield ! And since it was decreed that he should die, I thank God for the grand and courageous example of his suffering and death.

Oh, great, tender, brave soul ! Wherever thou art

to-night, in all God's Universe of worlds, I thank thee for the light of thy brave, true life, that has made life a better and grander thing to me.

In the light of thy life, thou hast lifted up before all the world, the nobility and grandeur of a true manhood.

Thou hast exalted and made honorable the home. Thou hast taught children to be reverent of age, parents to be tender to their children, husbands to be loyal and faithful, christians to be simple and sincere, statesmen to be honest, and men everywhere to be brave and true!

There were those who were inclined to sneer when on his inauguration day he kissed the white haired mother, and the loving and faithful wife.

But verily, verily, I say unto you, that wherever the gospel of pure homes, loving children, honorable marriage, and noble manhood is preached, there this loyal and loving act shall be told as a memorial of him.

He had reached the summit of earthly desire; he stood crowned with the love of millions," in that fierce light which beats upon a throne;" and just there he crowned and sceptered all true womanhood, by sharing all his honors with venerable mother and that true wife who had been his best friend in poverty, in trial, in evil as well as in good report.

But the end was nigh! From that high meridian splendor, the sun of his life rushed down into the blackness of the night of death.

That brave life was to be perfected by suffering.

Just in the very flush and fulness of life and joy; just as he was laying aside for a little the cares of state, to grasp once more the hands of school-day

friends ; so full of hope and manly pride, and thoughts of a great mission yet to be fulfilled, he was stricken down by the hand of a brainless egotist.

Day by day, vibrating between the flush of hope and chill of fear, we watched the failing life, until we saw him go down into the dark valley of the shadow of death.

In that chamber upon the ocean cliff he lay, and gazed out over the restless, ceaseless sea—symbol at once of time and of eternity.

There was a strange soothing in its sound, a wondrous harmony in its vastness, to his mighty, waiting soul.

The darkness came down with weird and solemn brooding over land and sea.

Hushed voices were in the chamber of death.

The long, hard agony was past. The consciousness of pain had ceased.

Visions of his dear, sweet home, and of the loved faces in that home, on the far away shores of Erie, came back to him. He murmured of the happy days gone by. Death came at last in friendly guise.

The strong-souled, tender-hearted "Crete" of his boyhood's love, sits beside him, clasping the loved but nerveless hand, as he goes down into the shadow of the valley.

The sobbing of the boundless Ocean that laves all lands, mingles with the sobbing of breaking hearts, and great, strong angels bear the royal soul up from its frail and out-worn tenement of clay, to the emerald shores of never-fading life.

"The old, old fashion death ! Oh, thank God, all who see it, for that older fashion yet, of immortality."

Noble soul ! Hail, and farewell !

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 013 789 752 0